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■ AT 18, THE YOUNGEST WORLD CHAMP ■ FIRST INDIAN AFTER ANAND AT SUMMIT

GUKESH KING OF ALL SQUARES

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN @ Singapore

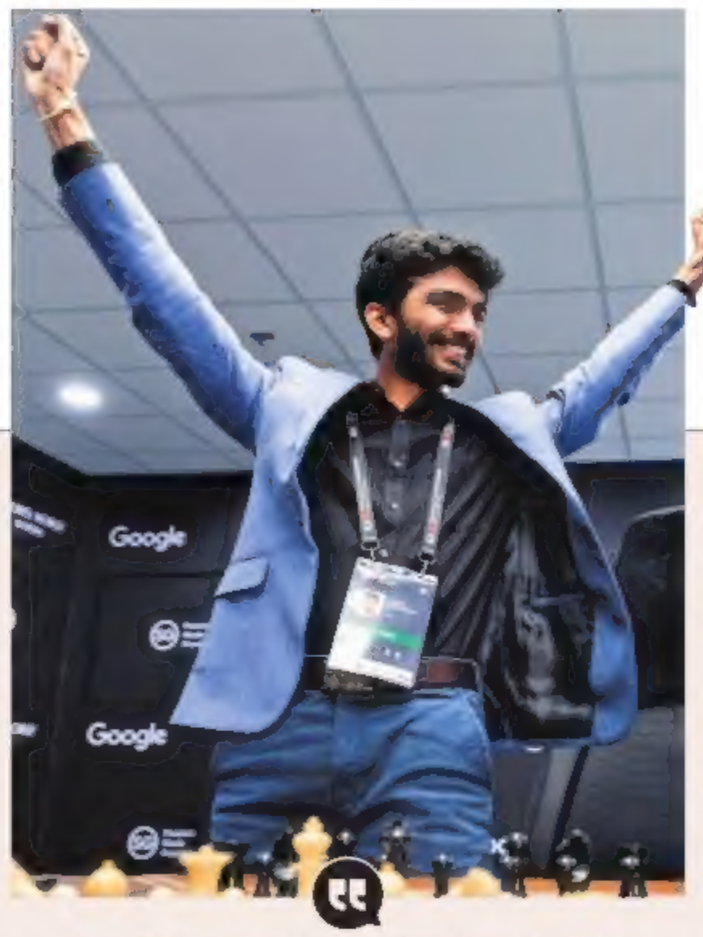
CHESS has a new king. The promised prince is here and he will be coronated on Friday evening. D Gukesh joined the most exclusive of Indian sporting clubs late on Thursday — only the second player and first since Viswanathan Anand to be crowned as world champ.

With the scores level at 6.5 after 13 games and the 14th game meandering towards a draw, attention had already turned towards tie-breaks on Friday. However, Ding Liren blundered to give the Indian teen an opportunity to become the youngest ever champion. As soon as he had realised what Ding had done, he welled up before basking in the afterglow of something he had wanted to achieve ever since he was a spectator at the World Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Anand in 2013. This continues the 18-year-old's rapid rise over the last two-and-a-half years.

In 2022, he stunned the world of chess when he won individual gold on board one at the Olympiad. Last year, he qualified for the Candidates before winning that eight-player tournament. In September, he again won individual gold from board one at Olympiad. Now, this.

His next target? Getting Magnus Carlsen back to the World Championship cycle. "When Magnus won (in Chennai), I thought I really want to be the one to bring back the title to India." As the lights were switched off and the people belatedly left the arena, one thought lingered. You are 18. Nobody younger than you has ever attempted this. You lose the first game. The person sitting opposite you has four-times your experience and is the world champion. It's time to forget the pre-match prediction and the outside noise. This is now as real as they come. You win the third game before eking out a string of draws. You miss a string of chances before winning game 11. Your opponent shows why he's the boss as he wins game 12. You miss an opportunity to convert in game 13 and have Black with tie-breaks to follow. You don't play too many Rapid and Blitz while your opponent is too good.

What do you do? You go for the win in game 14. Of course you go for the win. And you end up winning the most important match of your career. P19

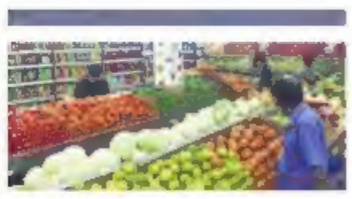


I was looking inside the glass box (in 2013). Thought it would be so cool to be inside one day. When Magnus won, I thought I really want to be the one to bring back the title to India

HOW THEY REACTED

The legendary Viswanathan Anand, who won the title five times, praised Gukesh. "It's a great feat. To become the world champion at the age of 18 is no small feat. It was a great sight to see him celebrating after the win. Hopefully, this will inspire a lot of aspiring players," Anand said.

"Historic and exemplary! Congratulations to Gukesh D on his remarkable accomplishment. This is the result of his unparalleled talent, hard work and unwavering determination," PM Modi wrote on 'X'



5.5%
INFLATION
EASES IN NOVEMBER AS FOOD PRICES DROP

Retail inflation fell to 5.48% and came within RBI's comfort zone, creating room for a rate cut by the central bank in February 2025 | P15

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE
44 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

SC halts surveys of mosques

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday issued a sweeping order restraining courts across the country from accepting fresh suits seeking to reclaim religious structures or passing orders to survey mosques to determine whether temples lie beneath them.

A three-judge bench led by the Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and justices K V Viswanathan and Sanjay Kumar said its nationwide directive will remain effective till further orders. The matter will be taken up again for hearing after four weeks.

The bench was hearing a batch of six petitions, including one filed by BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, challenging various provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

FREEZE ON 18 SUITS

The order stalls proceedings in 18 suits filed by Hindu parties seeking survey to ascertain the original religious character of 10 mosques, including Gyanvapi at Varanasi, Shahi Idgah Masjid at Mathura, and Shahi Jama Masjid at Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh

The 1991 law bars conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of places of worship as existed on August 15, 1947. However, the dispute over Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid at Ayodhya was kept out of its purview.

The bench made it clear that it would be examining the legality, contours, and ambit of the 1991 law. It said until it decides on the matter, other courts must keep off.

The court observed that the primary issue was with regard to Section 3 and 4 of the 1991 law. While Section 3 deals with bar of conversion of places of worship, Section 4 pertains to declaration as to the religious character of certain places of worship and bar of jurisdiction of courts, etc. The petitions argue these provisions take away the right of judicial remedy to reclaim a place of worship.

The bench asked the Centre to file a detailed affidavit clarifying its views in the matter within four weeks.

Cabinet OKs 'one poll' bill, may go to JPC for vetting

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Union Cabinet on Thursday approved two bills to implement Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plan of holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Local body elections have not been bunched with Lok Sabha and state polls as of now.

Sources said the draft legislations are likely to be introduced in the ongoing session of Parliament and could subsequently be referred to a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) for vetting.

The prime minister, sources said, was keen on holding wider consultations on the 'One Nation One Election' (ONOE) scheme by involving speakers of state legislative assemblies as well through the JPC.

The Cabinet's decision comes nearly three months after it accepted the recommendations of the high-level committee chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind on holding simultaneous polls.

Of the two bills approved on Thursday, one is on Constitutional amendments to conduct simultaneous polls. The second one is an ordinary bill to align elections for assemblies in the Union territories of Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir, sources said.

Sources said the two bills would not require ratification by at least 50% of the states.

EXPRESS READ

Siddaramaiah flays 'One Nation, One Poll'

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government is likely to pass a resolution opposing the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal of the Union Government. CM Siddaramaiah said that if needed, his government will take a similar resolution like Kerala and send out a strong message against this "anti-democratic move" | P7

CM says Panchamasalis' stir unconstitutional

Belagavi: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday termed Panchamasali Lingayats' "pressure tactics" for reservation under 2-A category unconstitutional and their actions indicate that the state government is not serious about their demand. He was addressing the Council | P4

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